Hysteria In “The Crucible” Causes The Characters To Change. Essay, Research Paper

Hysteria is a mental disorder marked by excitability, anxiety, or imaginary disorders. It can play an important role in people s lives. Hysteria supplants logic and enables people to believe that their neighbors, whom they have always considered highly respectable, do things they would never expect them of doing. In The Crucible , hysteria causes people to believe their friends are committing deplorable acts. The townsfolk accept and become active in the hysterical climate not only out of genuine religious piety but also because it gives them a chance to express repressed sentiments and to seek reparations from grudges. Hysteria suspends the rules of daily life and allows the acting out of every dark desire and hateful urge under the charade of righteousness. In The Crucible by Arthur Miller, the hysteria due to the paranoia of witchcraft causes Abigail to lie in order to save herself, Danforth to ruin the community, and Proctor to be convicted of witchery.

The hysteria surrounding the witchtrials causes Abigail to lie in order to save herself. She is affected by the hysteria because she does not want to exposed as a liar. She forgets about the people that are close to her in order to protect her reputation and identity. Abigail abandons Tituba, and accuses her of “sending her spirit on me in church; she makes me laugh at prayer” (41). Abigail also says Tituba “comes to me every night to go and drink blood (41). Abigail reacts like this only to save her from being suspected of witchery. Another way Abigail tries to save herself is when she tries to accuse Mary of practicing witchcraft. She is trying to save herself from being exposed

Puyot – 2

as a fraud. Mary was going to testify that Abigail and the girls were frauds, but Abigail says that Mary has descended a cold wind (108) upon the courtroom. She then starts to mimic Mary s every words and forces the other girls to do the same. Mary then breaks down and accuses Proctor of being a witch. Abigail lies about Mary being a witch in order to save herself from being uncovered.

Hysteria causes Danforth to ruin the community. The justice system that Danforth, the governor, had helped to create only had two choices for a person accused of witchery: death or imprisonment. The choice for either death or imprisonment allows Danforth to ruin the community by making the numbers of the free adults dwindle lower and lower. Danforth himself states that there are near to four hundred are in the jails from Marblehead to Lynn upon my signature (85). The chaos that Danforth is creating in the community is well illuminated by Hale. Hale tells the court that orphans wandering from house to house, abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, [and] the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere (130). Danforth is tarnishing the community because he is allowing the trials to continue, which leads to the death or imprisonment to many adults. The lack of adults causes children and cattle to have no supervision and allows the crops to die, which in the end destroys the community.

Hysteria allows Proctor to be convicted of practicing witchcraft. This conviction eventually leads to the death of him. Proctor brings Mary to court and tells Judge Danforth that she will testify that the girls are lying. Mary tells the court that the girls are lying. When the girls are brought in, they turn the tables by accusing Mary of bewitching

Puyot – 3

them. Abigail and the girls again pretend that Mary is bewitching them. Mary breaks down and says that Proctor wakes [her] every night, his eyes were like coals and his fingers claw [her] neck (119). Danforth states that Proctor is combined with the anti-Christ (119). Proctor is extremely angered by the false accusations. The madness in the courtroom causes Proctor to go insane and state in public that God is dead (119). Proctor is later convicted and sentenced to death. The hysteria caused by being accused of practicing witchcraft causes Mary to turn her back on Proctor and accuse him of being a witch as well as caused Proctor to break down and proclaim there is no God.

In The Crucible by Arthur Miller, the hysteria due to the paranoia of witchcraft causes Abigail to lie in order to save herself, Danforth to ruin the community, and Proctor to be convicted of witchery. Hysteria causes the characters let go of their logic and think the preposterous. It causes Abigail to lie about Mary being a witch in order to save herself from being uncovered. It causes Danforth to soil the community because he is letting the trials go on which is leading to the death or imprisonment to many adults. The hysteria caused Proctor to abandon his common sense and state there is no God. The hysteria surrounding the trial causes the characters to lose their reason and common sense and do deplorable things.

37c